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ABSTRACT

This exploratory study attempted to determine the extent to which behavioral objectives are relevant in mass media courses at the high school level. The study elicited responses to general objectives of high school mass media or consumer media courses, objectives of post-high school courses adaptable to the high school, and objectives of units suggested for high school mass media courses. The questionnaire was sent to 70 high school publications advisors who were members of the Journalism Education Association, but only 17 responded. The sample was too small to justify any conclusions. (RB)

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BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES OF MASS MEDIA COURSES

An Exploratory Inquiry by Quill and Scroll Studies

By Laurence R. Campbell, Director

To what extent are behavioral objectives for average media consumers at the post high school level relevant at the high school level? This question was asked in an exploratory inquiry by Quill and Scroll Studies in late spring, 1974.

These instructions were provided:

First

You are invited to read general objectives at the high school level as presented in the 1972 Quill and Scroll Study entitled:

Evaluative Criteria for High School Textbooks in Journalism and Mass Media Courses

You will have an opportunity to express your opinion.

Second

You are invited to read behavioral objectives as reported in Janice Rawson's 1973 report on:

Objectives of Instruction about Mass Communications
(Suitable for the Average Media Consumer at the Post-High School Level)

Please note

In the first study some of the general objectives were more widely supported for high school journalism courses correlated with student publications.

In the first study the "experts" were high school teachers. In the second study the panel consisted of "experts" who for the most part were college level teachers. Since you are a leader in high school journalism we appreciate your interest and respect your judgment. As a participant in the study, you will receive a summary.

The study elicited satisfactory responses on:

1) General objectives of high school mass media or consumer media courses.

2) Behavioral objectives of post-high school courses adaptable to high school courses.

3) Units suggested for high school mass media courses.

Participants found the instrument too complicated to correlate behavioral objectives with either general objectives or suggested units.

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Then, too, the instrument was circulated late in the spring. It was sent to about seventy advisers in JEA, but only 17 replied. Hence, the sample is too small to justify any conclusions.

High school mass media or consumer media courses should help teenagers to become:

1. Intelligent users of mass media that seek to inform, to persuade, to entertain. (82%)
   Strongly approve, 17.

2. Mature, responsible citizens who work as a team, solving problems cooperatively; identify school and local issues; develop desirable character-personality traits. (53%)
   Strongly approve, 9; approve, 6; undecided, 1; strongly disapprove, 1.

3. Reliable fact finders who are accurate, truthful, objective in getting facts, news, data; in verifying facts, news, data; in analyzing and interpreting facts, news, data. (64%)
   Strongly approve, 11; approve, 5; undecided, 1.

4. Writers who develop effective skills in narration, exposition, description, and argumentation in presenting news and factual content; persuasion content; enjoyment content. (48%)
   Strongly approve, 8; approve, 4; undecided, 4; disapprove, 1.

5. Student journalists who produce "first class" or better newspapers or newsmagazines or news services or newscasts or yearbooks, magazines, anthologies, films, or broadcasts. (30%)
   Strongly approve, 9; approve, 4; undecided, 2; disapprove, 2.

6. Young people adequately informed on mass media career possibilities, notably professional opportunities and professional education.
   Strongly approve, 5; approve, 9; undecided, 3.

Participants indicated the extent to which they approved or disapproved of these behavioral objectives:

1. The student will explain the rationale behind the constitutional guarantee of "freedom of the press," noting especially who is protected, and relate it to the modern news concept (the public's right to know) as advocated by journalists.
   Strongly approve, 9; approve, 6; undecided, 2.

2. The student will understand that "freedom of the press" is a right that belongs to the public and is not meant to protect only those who possess the implements of publishing.
   Strongly approve, 12; approve, 5.

3. The student will briefly describe the characteristics that are common to all the major mass media and not the differences and/or unique characteristics that can be assigned to each medium. Response should include reference to primary functions, content, operations, audiences, advantages, and limitations.
   Strongly approve, 9; approve, 6; undecided, 1; disapprove, 1.

4. The student will construct a list of reasons why all citizens have the responsibility of keeping informed about public problems and of the actions taken on them by those in public office.
   Strongly approve, 5; approve, 11; undecided, 1.

5. The students will discuss the limits there are on the public's right to know and the implications these might have for the function and credibility of the news media. He will support or attack the call for government secrecy in a democratic society.
   Strongly approve, 7; approve, 8; undecided, 2.

6. The student will discuss and comment on the conflict between a mass medium's function as a quasi-public utility for dispensing vital information, and as a capitalistic enterprise seeking profit.
   Strongly approve, 6; approve, 9; undecided, 2.

7. The student will compile a list of questions that should be considered in assessing the validity of a published opinion survey or poll results. He will evaluate a published poll to demonstrate how answers to questions reveal fallacious information.
   Strongly approve, 7; approve, 6; undecided, 3.

8. The student will define "news" and list the various types of stories included under the category of news. He will submit a clipped example of each, noting the distinguishing characteristics of each, especially examples of objectivity and comment or bias in reporting.
   Strongly approve, 11; approve, 6.

9. The student will define libel, distinguishing it from fair comment and criticism (as well as slander), and explain the possible penalties that a publication faces if it is successfully tried for libel.
   Strongly approve, 12; approve, 5.

10. The student will outline the economic foundation of each of the major media, noting especially the extent to which it is dependent on advertising revenue and consumer payment.
    Strongly approve, 3; approve, 11; undecided, 2; disapprove, 1.

11. The student will recall publicized incidents which reflect the clash between the individual's right of privacy and the public's right to know. He will suggest guidelines to justify printing or withholding information (who-what) when such a class develops.
    Strongly approve, 6; approve, 9; undecided, 2.

12. The student will explain and defend or attack the contention that public opinion holds very little weight in the United States. He will detail the tactics and techniques of pressure groups in influencing public opinion, government officials, lawmakers, and the press.
    Strongly approve, 5; approve, 8; undecided, 4.

13. The student will discuss the controversy concerning government subpoena of reporter notes, source identification, or TV outtakes, explaining and commenting on recent incidents (i.e., "selling of the Pentagon, Black Panthers or Mansion trial coverage").
    Strongly approve, 6; approve, 9; undecided, 2.

14. The student will discuss and explain the existence of a monopoly press in the United States today and comment on the causes and the validity of the dangers.
    Strongly approve, 6; approve, 8; undecided, 2.

15. The student will explain what is meant by the adversary relationship between the press and the government, stating his views on the appropriateness of the arrangement.
    Strongly approve, 6; approve, 10; undecided, 1.

16. The student will explain the several aspects of the "gatekeeper" operation in the selection of news for publication and compare to news management operation in government.
    Strongly approve, 5; approve, 12.

17. The student will understand that the frequent and prominently publicized confrontations between the press and its traditional adversaries--the government and the courts--is generally healthy and that the free press and fair trial and credibility gap debates should reinforce faith in government, media, and courts, rather than dilute it.
    Strongly approve, 9; approve, 7; undecided, 1.

18. The student will list the restrictions (legal and ethical) placed on a journalist's reporting of the news. He will explain why all news should not be printed or broadcast and give examples to support his position.
    Strongly approve, 11; approve, 5; undecided, 1.

19. The student will list the advantages and disadvantages of each of the major mass media--in terms of the consumer's needs and interests. He will note dominant role (i.e., entertainment, information) and characteristics of each medium.
    Strongly approve, 13; approve, 4.

20. The student will assume the role of a specific medium manager and describe how he would solve the traditional problem of whether to provide what the audience wants or what it should have. He will specify who determines the content involved in either case.
    Strongly approve, 8; approve, 6; undecided, 2; disapprove, 1.

The extent to which 16 suggested units were approved or disapproved is reported in the following data.

1. The Teenager and Communication: Roles of consumer-citizen and producer and source; process, perception through senses; seeing, viewing, reading, listening, hearing; response - nonverbal, spoken, written; communication and learning; communication and problem-solving.
   Strongly approve, 8; approve, 6; undecided, 1.

2. The Teenager and Mass Media: Origin, development, scope; open or libertarian, closed or authoritarian, transitional or undeveloped societies; academic societies; functions; policies; guidelines; structure; careers.
   Strongly approve, 6; approve, 5; undecided, 5.

3. Safeguarding the Consumer: Policy guidelines, staff training, codes of ethics; copy editing; picture editing; proof reading; First Amendment; libel; copyright, invasion of privacy; pressure groups; censorship.
   Strongly approve, 12; approve, 4.

4. The Consumer and News and Non-news: Reading, viewing, and listening to news; defining news and non-news; recognizing news, news criteria; classifying news; local news, non-local news, school news.
   Strongly approve, 13; approve, 4; disapprove, 1.

5. Gathering Local News: Being present at the event; interviewing; consulting records; conducting surveys and polls; verifying content; photographing news.
   Strongly approve, 12; approve, 5.

6. Gathering Non-local News: Press associations - AP, UPI, networks; capital correspondents; foreign correspondents; syndicates; unsolicited news - public relations sources.
   Strongly approve, 7; approve, 4; undecided, 6.

7. Gathering School News: Administration; curricular, cocurricular, sports; community; yearbook copy.
   Strongly approve, 9; approve, 6; undecided, 1; disapprove, 1.

8. Gathering Other News: Science; health; politics; government; violence; crime; minorities; business; labor.
   Strongly approve, 6; approve, 8; undecided, 3.

9. Writing the News: Print media news structure; nonprint media news structure; style; readability.
   Strongly approve, 10; approve, 5; undecided, 1.

10. Persuasion and Propaganda: Reading, viewing, listening to persuasion content; nature of persuasion; propaganda - U.S., foreign; international media; slanted news; advertising; public relations.
    Strongly approve, 12; approve, 4; undecided, 1.

11. Responsible Leadership: Columns; editorials; reviews; critical essays; letters to the editor; symposiums - pro and con; polls and surveys; cartoons; diagrams; charts.
    Strongly approve, 13; approve, 3; undecided, 1.

12. Mass Media and Enjoyment: Reading, viewing, and listening; how, who, what, when, why, where articles; photographs; art.
    Strongly approve, 13; approve, 4.

13. Mass Media and Enjoyment: Art, comics; humor; fiction; essays; poetry; drama; nonprint media.
    Strongly approve, 9; approve, 8.

14. Supporting Mass Media: Costs of production; support from public enterprise; support from nonpublic enterprise; support from school enterprise; revenue from sale of copies; revenue from sale of advertising; revenue from other sources; responsible financing and accounting; monopolies; chains.
    Strongly approve, 5; approve, 10; undecided, 1; disapprove, 1.

15. Printing Mass Media: Symbols and signals; art; writing; photography; headlines; design; printing - duplicated, relief, offset; printing - specifications, contracts.
    Strongly approve, 5; approve, 8; undecided, 4.

16. Producing Nonprint Media: Photography; telegraph; telephone; cable; motion pictures; wireless, radio; records, tapes; television; satellites; performing arts.
    Strongly approve, 4; approve, 9; undecided, 4.

Continuing study of general and behavioral objectives of units and courses in consumer media at different levels is highly desirable. Perhaps this preliminary study may be useful in such investigation.